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ABSTRACT

Using information obtained from a variety of field evaluations, this paper reviews social trends that underscore the the need for increased focus on re-entry women students in community colleges and proposes the development of a re-entry program at Bakersfield College to address those needs. The first section of the paper cites national and institutional statistics regarding women, with particular focus on their participation in the work force and educational institutions. This section indicates that: (1) re-entry women now outnumber college men for their age groups in both absolute numbers and proportionate rates; (2) the number of women in the work force has grown by 173% from 1947 to 1980, yet women still earn two-thirds as much as men; (3) institutional policies generally do not meet the needs of women or part-time students; (4) a 23% decline in the traditional college age group (18-24) is predicted by 1997; (5) an increase in older community college students is expected, from 3.9 million in 1978 to 4.2 million in 1988; and (6) returning full- or part-time students generally perform well academically. In light of these needs and trends, the paper then proposes that Bakersfield College establish a re-entry program to focus on recruitment, orientation, advising, admissions assistance, counseling, career development in non-traditional fields, child care, financial aid, and job placement. (LAL)

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RE-ENTRY WOMEN AND PART-TIME STUDENTS: AN OVERVIEW WITH RELEVANT STATISTICS

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This paper is written to offer information for the planning of Bakersfield College services and realizing community and societal needs. The information is taken from field evaluations published by the Association of American Colleges and from the Carngie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education, The National Center for Education Statistics and the 1983 Census Bureau Report. All statistics are from 1981 or current unless stated otherwise.

Re-entry women, many of whom had earlier deferred college and career preparation to fulfill roles as wives and mothers, now outnumber college men, for their age groups, in both absolute numbers and in proportionate rates, throughout the United States.

Whether because of economic necessity or personal choice, women are now entering or re-entering the labor force at unprecendented rates. The correlation between a good education and a good job has not gone unnoticed by women in the work force, as 67 percent of all women 35 and over who were enrolled in school in October, 1978 were also in the labor force.

Because the average woman, whether single or married, will work more than 34 years of her life she has a large stake in obtaining a sound education. The new Census Bureau Report gives the statistic that the number of women in the work force grew by 173 percent from 1947 to 1980. The Report states that half of all adult women worked outside the home in 1980. The authors

of the Report say that, "Perhaps no other change has more far reaching implications for society and the economy than the dramatic increase in labor force participation of women."

Women are now marrying almost two years later, on average, than after World War II and a growing share remain single until after completion of college. The average age at first marriage has increased from 20.3 to 22.1 from 1950-1980 and the proportion of women who had not married between ages 20 and 24 climbed from about one-fourth to 45 percent. Childbearing is down with a sharp increase in women in their 20's who have not had children. More women are heading households than in the past.

All of those figures and more accounts for the closing of the gap in college enrollment, with percentages above those of men in the 1981 school year. Inspite of those figures, women still earn only about two-thirds as much as men and they remain concentrated in traditionally female jobs, such as nursing, teaching, retail sales, secretaries and clerical work. While they enroll in college at about the same rate as men now, women still earn fewer professional and graduate degrees.

It is predicted by the Carngie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education that there will be a 23 percent decline in the traditional college-bound group of 18-24 year olds by 1997. The council maintains that the impact on colleges will be partially offset by increases in participation by students 25 and older, and by women and by members of minority groups. The National Center for Education Statistics forcasts that older students will account for public community college enrollment increasing from 3.9 million in 1978 to 4.2 million in 1988.

The number of part-time women students, most of whom are past the usual college age, has doubled each year for the past several years and is expected to have done so again in 1980. Women have generally been more likely than men to attend school on a part-time basis, and adult women are now doing so in greater numbers than ever before. The decision to attend school on a part-time basis is a matter of necessity rather than choice. A variety of factors, such as full-time employment, financial constraints and/or family obligations make it difficult or impossible for most re-entry women to return to school full-time. Just over one-fourth of adult women head a household and those households account for an increasing share of those in poverty.

Institutional attitudes and policies most often do not meet the needs of the re-entry woman who is taking care of her children, working and who wants to better her skills and education. Any student who does not attend school full-time may automatically be viewed as uncommitted, frivolous, or seeking "fullfillment" rather than academic achievement. However, the part-time re-entry woman is as serious academically as her younger full-time classmates despite differences in courseload and limited time on campus. She often makes many sacrifices to return to school and once on campus performs exceedingly well, whether she is a part-time or a full-time student. Re-entry students warn higher grade point averages when they return to school than when they were previously enrolled. The total number of full-time students achieving G.P.A.'s of 3.75, by age groups, in Fall 1982 at Bakersfield College were 97 age 18 to 21 and 160 age 21 and older. Also, the completion rate for courses enrolled in by part-time students is higher than that of full-time students.

Unfortunately, however, many colleges and universities have traditionally viewed both "part-time" and "adult" students as not "serious" and as peripheral to their institutional goals. Institutional policies governing part-time students although ostensibly fair because they affect both men and women, are nevertheless likely to affect many more women than men students, especially older women students. Bakersfield College, as of the fall 1982 semester, had 46.2 male part-time students and 53.8 female part-time students.

Some literature suggests that some policies governing part-time students, due to the larger enrollment of older women, may violate both Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 because of their disproportionate effect on women. Re-entry women in particular may be doubly disadvantaged by policies that make earning a degree as a part-time student difficult or impossible, and by the attitude on the part of faculty, staff and full-time students that part-time status means less than full academic commitment. The procedural and psychological barriers created by this attitude and the policies they have fostered may be further intensified for those re-entry women wo, despite their ambition and commitment, may initially lack confidence in their abilities.

Bakersfield College demonstrates discrimination towards the older re-entry student when it offers financial aid and special counseling assistance to the Presidents Scholars. The institution also discriminates against part-time students when they require 12 units for job placement and child-care, two areas which provide desperately needed services by many re-entry women.

On most campuses, support services generally have been directed to the traditional, 18-21 full-time student. Re-entry students who are employed in the community and have returned to school on a part-time or evening basis

may find access to existing services and personnel even more difficult. Institutional policies and practices regarding campus employment, medical insurance, health care, housing options and other basic services may inadvertently exclude or discriminate against returning students.

The American Association of Colleges "field evaluation report" of 1981 says that all indications point toward a continuing increase of older students on campus. Besides coming back to college to finish one degree....in preparation for a job or for personal satisfaction....many adults will return again to prepare for second or even third careers. The report goes on to say, however, that the more inclusive concerns of re-entry women - which often encompass the responsibilities of job and family - have yet to be addressed at many schools. To prepare for these returning women, and to help them make the transition back to college a re-entry program may be the answer.

The intent of this paper is to demonstrate the need for a re-entry program on the Bakersfield College campus. We have examined the societal trends which are applicable to our country, community and campus.

The focus of a re-entry program on this BC campus would be to:

(1) identify and recruit potential re-entry students through publicity, workshops, seminars, etc.

(2) orient the returning students to the campus itself

(3) advise and counsel the re-entry student

(4) help students through the admissions procedure

(5) support the returning student through the initial days and weeks of adjustment to classes

(6) provide ongoing encouragement and counseling to those students coping with study, classes, family, and finances

(7) acquaint re-entry students with potential for career development in non-traditional program areas

(8) provide child care, financial aids and job placement services that do not discriminate against part-time students.

The needs of re-entry students and sensitivity toward the non-traditionally oriented and part-time student must be recognized and supported by the entire institution.

Planning for the future at Bakersfield College must include a comprehensive look at the services currently provided re-entry students. That view will point the institution in the direction of recruiting and retaining that group of individuals from within our community who need the special programs and services of a community college. That group, excelling in their studies, and persevering in spite of difficult circumstances are, of course, the returning part-time and full-time re-entry students.

Summary:

....Re-entry women now outnumber college men....for their age groups in both absolute numbers and in proportionate rates.....

....Women are now entering or re-entering the labor force at unprecedented rates

....the average woman, single or married, will work more than 34 years of her life

....number of women in the work force has grown by 173% from 1947-1980

....women still earn about two-thirds as much as men...and, are usually found in traditionally female jobs

....it is predicted that there will be a 23% decline in the typical college bound group of 18-24 year olds by 1997

....impact of fewer traditional students will be partially offset by students 25 years of age and older. Older students will account for public community college enrollment increasing from 3.9 million in 1978 to 4.2 million in 1988

....must address the part-time issue....the decision to attend school on a part-time basis is a matter of necessity rather than choice

....institutional attitudes and policies most often do not meet the needs of re-entry women

....the part-time student is viewed as "uncommitted", "frivolous" or "seeking fulfillment"

....academically, the returning full or part-time students perform exceedingly well

....the total number of full-time students achieving G.P.A.'s of 3.75 by age groups in Fall of 1982 at Bakersfield College were:

97 ....ages 18 to 21

160 ...ages 21 and older

....completion rate for courses enrolled in by part-time students is higher than that of full-time students

....institutional policies governing part-time students are likely to adversely affect more women than men

BC Fall 1982 Part-time students

Male....46.2

Female...53.8

....institutional policies governing part-time students may violate both Title IX of the Educational Amendment of 1972 and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, because of their disproportionate effect on women

....part-time re-entry women may be doubly disadvantaged by institutional policies and attitudes

....Bakersfield College may be discriminating against the older re-entry student by offering the Presidents Scholars Program to recently graduated high school students only

....Bakersfield College placement, financial aid and child care services may be discriminating against the part-time re-entry student

....there is a need for a well defined re-entry program at Bakersfield College

....the re-entry part-time or full-time students demonstrate a high caliber of performance in their course work

....planning for the future at Bakersfield College must include the development of re-entry services that will recruit and retain the very valuable re-entry students within our community.

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